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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Port Commission tackles busy agenda

(NEWPORT,OR) Boat ramp closures as halibut season approaches, the general manager's salary, and a likely change on the commission were all discussed at Tuesday's Port of Newport Port Commission meeting.

Meeting via video teleconferencing, the Port's monthly meeting was chaired by Vice President Jim Burke in the absence of President Sara Skamser, who it was explained would likely be resigning for personal reasons.

Port General Manager Paula Miranda explained that she had received a call from Skamser indicating a desire to resign but had yet to receive an official letter of resignation. Both Burke and Miranda indicated that a formal process to fill Skamser's vacancy would not begin until a letter was received.

"I am very sad to see Sara resign," Miranda commented. "I've worked closely with her in my first year here. She's been very fair, very open, and a good listener." That dismay was echoed by all of Skamser's fellow commissioners. No further action was taken.

The biggest source of discussion centered around an issue with which the Port has grappled since the onset of Coronavirus-related shut-downs: the closure of the South Beach boat ramp. Enacted in response to the Governor's "Stay at Home" order of March 23 and Lincoln County's emergency order, some boaters have questioned why the ramp can't open to local traffic.

"We can't really distinguish tourists from locals because we get federal grants, we get state grants, and so this isn't just a local marina. It is a public marina," Miranda said. "It is very difficult for us to come up with one decision that will make everyone happy."

Currently, only commercial vessels and emergency services, like the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, are using the ramp. South Beach Marina moorage holders are also allowed a one-time use for a single launch since they are technically tenants with the right to put their boat in a slip.

The boat ramp issue becomes infinitely more complicated with Halibut season approaching in May. Although the Central Coast nearshore season opens on Friday, it is the all-depths season which attracts the largest numbers of anglers. That season is tentatively slated to open May 14.

"We are trying to work with ODFW (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) to see if there is a way they can work in sync with the region," Miranda explained.

Long-time Commissioner Walter Chuck agreed that the greatest concern comes from all-depth halibut season.

"ODFW has counted between 600 and 800 boats across the bar (in past seasons). That's a big injection of people," he remarked.

Miranda indicated that dialogue is on-going between the Port and ODFW but at the point that all-depth season opens, it would be difficult for the ramp to remain closed.

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Earlier on Tuesday, the Port Commission met in executive session to conduct a performance evaluation of the general manager who is approaching her one-year anniversary at the helm. During the public meeting, Commissioners referenced Miranda's positive evaluation, discussed a desire to sign a three-year contract in the future, and ultimately approved a 10 percent salary increase.

"Paula has done a great job over the last year by bringing a cohesive team together and providing vision and focus for the Port of Newport," Burke remarked after the meeting.

While Miranda's performance was praised, the comparison between her salary and that of similar Port managers was also a factor in implementing the pay increase. The Commission will consider moving from a one-year contract to a three-year contract at a future meeting.

Port administrative staff members provided updates on Port operations and the impact of Covid-19. While the RV Park has lost approximately \$22,000 in revenue during this period, expenses are also down and both Miranda and Port Finance Director Mark Brown expressed reassurance that the Port can survive the losses to date.

Port Commissioners also received an update from Sara Means, Regional Solutions coordination, on Governor Kate Brown's process and planning for re-opening Oregon.

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